



PRESS RELEASE

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OVER 600 TRAINED TO PROTECT WISCONSIN'S CHILDREN FROM METHAMPHETAMINE

Madison, Wisconsin -- Since May of 2005 over 600 individuals have been trained to protect Wisconsin's children from the dangers of methamphetamine. Two "Drug Endangered Children" (DEC) training conferences have been held in the state. The second conference concluded today in Wausau. The first was held in Chippewa Falls in May. The conferences were jointly sponsored by state, local, and federal agencies.

The National DEC Alliance provided the instructors and the training curriculum. Each conference was attended by health care workers, social service and victim service providers, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, probation officers, and educators. Participants learned how to recognize meth labs and the symptoms exhibited by meth users, and how to protect children exposed to meth use and manufacture. Conference sessions included training on the components of a DEC program, research on children exposed to meth, medical assessment of meth victims, safety issues for law enforcement and first responders, investigation of child abuse, and the prosecution of DEC cases. The DEC program also emphasizes the need to educate parents and the community about the hazards of meth.

At the conference in Wausau, Stephen P. Sinnott, the United States Attorney for the Western District of Wisconsin, stressed how the DEC training represents a recognition of the need for an integrated, collaborative approach to address the problem. "Prosecutions are important, and we will continue our vigorous federal prosecutions of meth dealers," Sinnott said. "But the days are gone when police officers and prosecutors try to address the problem by simply locking up the dealers and manufacturers. Now we are also focusing on children as the abused victims of these meth operations. Kids who are forced to live in a house where meth is manufactured – and where the children are exposed to toxic chemicals – are the victims of child abuse. It is to the great credit of these DEC training participants that they are working together to help our children."

Washburn County has been hard hit by the methamphetamine epidemic. Washburn County Sheriff Terry Dryden, a member of the Wisconsin DEC Statewide Steering Committee, said, "Local, state, and federal law enforcement officials in Wisconsin have made combating meth a top priority in the past decade. But these efforts are no longer limited to investigation and prosecution. Law enforcement professionals are also working together to engage our communities -- parents, students, schools and businesses -- in the fight against this highly addictive drug."

One focus of the national training sessions is to encourage the formation of local DEC programs. Local DEC programs are up and running in Polk and Washburn Counties. In addition, DEC programs are in formation in Bayfield, Chippewa, Douglas, Dunn, Eau Claire, Lacrosse, Lincoln, Marathon, Rusk, and Trempealeau Counties.

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